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Summer 2003

Update

News from Councilmember Nancy Floreen

Issue 1

Coming to the Council with an issue?

Tips on testifying and lobbying . . .

- Be clear. Tell us exactly what you want at the beginning of your written or oral testimony. That will help everyone focus their attention.
- Be sure your facts are correct, but don't weigh down your testimony with too many figures and details. Bring those in a handout that can be reviewed later. Your testimony should be concise and credible.
- Make it easy for the listener to agree with your point of view. Find out the legal and political framework for the issue at hand and show how your position fits.
- Make it easy for us to remember you. Always leave a handout with your name, number and address and key points summarized.
- Be yourself! A personal touch makes your commentary stand out.

**Participating
in "Bike to
Work Day".**



As a supporter of both recreational and commuting transportation options, I have enjoyed the many hiker/biker trails in the County. It's important to continue to provide and expand, as much as possible, choices for our residents in getting around the County.



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Dear Friends,

My first six months as an at-large member of the County Council have flown by, most of it spent immersed in our very complex budget process. Although I came onto the Council with a good deal of experience with County Government, I found the budget process a real eye-opener. It was quite a challenge to address the many and sometimes-competing needs, especially given the enormous cuts in state aid this year.

I'm honored to serve as the new Chair of the Transportation and Environment Committee, as well as a member of the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee.

These positions give me a unique vantage point from which to focus on the issues that motivated my candidacy: finding meaningful solutions to traffic congestion and preserving our communities.

This Newsletter is the first of what I plan to be annual updates on what the Council accomplished during the budget season and what I hope to achieve during the year to come. This is one way to communicate with you, and I certainly hope to hear from you in return. I can be reached in several ways:

e-mail ~ councilmember.floreen@montgomerycountymd.gov

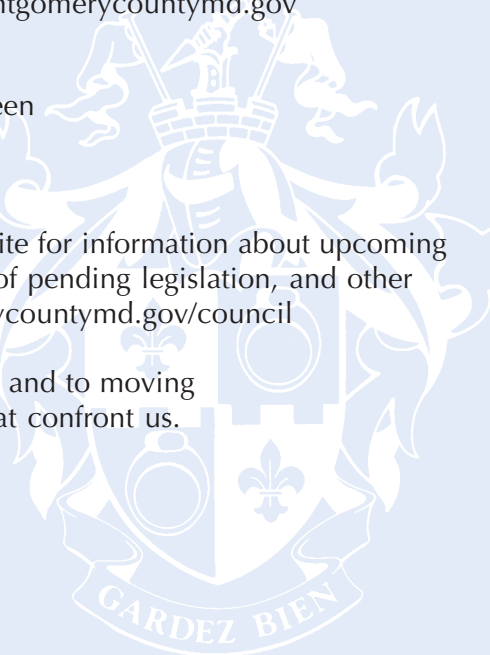
phone ~ 240-777-7959

letter ~ Councilmember Nancy Floreen
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Also, be sure to visit the Council's website for information about upcoming agenda items, meetings, complete text of pending legislation, and other useful information ~ www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council

I look forward to hearing your concerns and to moving ahead ~ together ~ on all the issues that confront us.

Nancy



Excellence in Education

Montgomery County residents need and expect first-class public schools. That’s why I voted to dedicate \$1.5 billion to public school operations in the next fiscal year. All-day kindergarten, reduced class size and enhanced teacher development are making a difference for our students. It’s essential that we maintain and expand these important initiatives.

Our students also need adequate school facilities in order to achieve their potential. Significant cuts in state funding for school construction have slowed the pace of many important projects in our public schools. As a result, the Board of Education made a policy decision to add needed classroom space rather than modernize existing facilities. Despite the fiscal constraints, my Council colleagues and I succeeded in funding a number of projects to be completed in 2004, including:

- Rocky Hill Middle School Replacement
- Damascus High School Core Improvements
- Montgomery Village Middle School Modernization
- Northwest High School Addition
- Northwood High School Reopening
- Rockville High School Modernization
- Somerset Elementary School Modernization
- Oak View Elementary School Core Improvements



Moving Forward

You and I know that Montgomery County has had a woefully underfunded transportation program for too many years. Our personal frustration with the resulting congestion has been verified by real life numbers. The experts say we have the third worst congestion in the nation and the second longest commute.

Not only are we experiencing all this traffic; but we are hitting the potholes and waiting interminably for an overgrown street tree to be pruned. Montgomery County is a service oriented government, but insufficient funding has pushed us far behind in the transportation area.

I began this budget season intending to bring us out of this predicament. Unfortunately, the difficulty of the task was increased enormously thanks to actions at the State level. The Governor slashed the County’s share of highway user fees by one-third and vetoed the vehicle registration surcharge that would have yielded \$18.3 million this year dedicated to transportation. So we began behind the eight ball.

As Chair of the Transportation and Environment Committee, I assumed the task of rebuilding a decimated transportation budget into a product that could provide the services and road planning we so desperately need.

I am pleased to say we were able to ensure that facility planning for future roads was fully funded. This was critical. Without that funding, there was no possibility for any road proposal to begin the process toward construction anytime in the near future. Roads such as Montrose Parkway, Stringtown Road, and M-83 are now going to move forward. Certainly more needs to be done, but we made a strong start.

While roads have been high on everyone’s priority list, I also emphasized transit initiatives and pedestrian safety programs. So in the coming year, you will be seeing more natural gas fueled buses, a continuation of free bus rides for kids, transportation assistance for senior citizens, and a host of improved crosswalk, traffic calming, and safety initiatives. Don’t be shy about letting me know about other transportation-related items we should be working on as well.

Construction of roads that actually provide or increase capacity and substantial enhancement of mass transit options are the most important goals of my term on this Council. I am also determined to significantly improve County services in the areas of tree pruning, road resurfacing, and pedestrian safety. Please let me know if you are experiencing problems in these service areas.

Golden Shovel

In January, the Council adopted my resolution and instituted the SAFE Sidewalks/Golden Shovel Awards to honor residents who pitched in to help dig out their neighbors in times of need — and we certainly saw plenty of need this winter!

Over 100 County residents were nominated for the award this spring. Sixty-two grateful County residents took the time to nominate the neighbors who helped them during this difficult snow season – a lot of letters for a first-time program.

While every nominee was impressive, I found that some were truly outstanding. We honored a total of 28 residents with Golden Shovels at a Council session in early April. They came from all over the County, ranging in age from 14 to 78. Winners included families and individuals working alone. These are the types of people who pitch in to help without being asked and without expecting any recognition.

During my time in office, I intend to do all I can to honor the folks who deserve it – the great volunteers of Montgomery County.



Presenting the “Golden Shovel” Award



The AGP

Now that we have completed our work on the budget, the Council will turn its attention to legislative initiatives and land use issues. I predict that work on the Annual Growth Policy (AGP) will be our most difficult project for the rest of this year. In the past largely ignored, but this year likely to be controversial, this policy is supposed to be the framework to coordinate new development with road and school capacity. In essence it examines current and planned infrastructure and determines the staging of future development.

The AGP is written every two years by the Planning Board and comes to the Council for review and final approval. We will begin our work in September on what has grown into a highly complicated document. I was a member of the County Planning Board in 1986 when the first AGP was drafted, and I must agree with those who say it has become impenetrable since then.

The Council requested the Planning Board to create a new model this year to simplify the process of examining traffic congestion and school capacity issues into a more understandable and reality-based approach. I have seen the first drafts, and it is a new world.

I invite those of you who are interested in understanding the connections between legally sustainable growth policy, transportation, and school capacity to download a copy of the AGP from the park and planning website (www.mncppc.org) and jump into the debate. I want to hear from you on this critical issue that will guide our future development.

Extracurricular Activities

The Council has kept me busy. In addition to serving on the Transportation and Environment and the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committees, I also am a member of our new Homeland Security Committee. I am delighted to serve as the Council representative on the Board of Directors of

To Your Health

This spring I introduced legislation to ban smoking in all Montgomery County eating and drinking establishments. On July 1, the Council voted 8-1 to adopt my bill, sending a strong message that the public health comes first.

Smoking has long been barred in every workplace in the State – except restaurants. Now the Council has closed that loophole and will protect restaurant workers and patrons alike against the known dangers of second-hand smoke. Those dangers include cancer, heart disease, asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia. The Maryland Department of Mental Health and Mental Hygiene reports that roughly 1,000 Maryland non-smokers die every year from diseases caused by second-hand smoke. The Council’s action sends the message, loud and clear, that we value clean air in bars and restaurants, just as we do in all other workplaces.

Over 60 reputable studies have found that eliminating smoking in restaurants does not harm business. In fact, smoke-free restaurant and bar laws have no impact or a positive impact on sales and employment. These studies relied on objective data provided to independent agencies, including sales, employment, business permit application and similar objective measures.

Not only were there strong policy reasons to enact this legislation, there was overwhelming public support as well. A March 2003 statewide poll found that among voters in the Washington suburbs, including Montgomery County, 67% favored legislation to prohibit smoking in restaurants and bars.

This bill does more for the public health than any jurisdiction in the Washington metropolitan area. I believe non-smokers from across the region – not to mention the 90% of County residents who do not smoke – will flock to our restaurants, grateful for the chance to eat smoke-free. Over 130 localities in eighteen states prohibit smoking in restaurants. I hope that other jurisdictions in this region will follow our lead and enact similar protections.

the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, because I firmly believe in regional cooperation, especially on critical environmental issues. My other appointment, as the Council’s representative on the Board of Directors of the Strathmore Hall Foundation, reflects my strong interest in and support of the arts and humanities in Montgomery County.